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December 5, 2018

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105 regarding the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018.

Dear Madam,

United Way of Summit County appreciates the opportunity to comment on the current effort undertaken by the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a three-digit number to the National Suicide Hotline and to assess the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

In Summit County, Ohio, our United Way has identified four bold goals to achieve by 2025:

- 65% of Akron Public Schools third-graders reading at or above grade level
- 90% of Akron Public Schools high-schoolers graduating in 4 years, with 60% college/career ready
- Financially empower 11,000 people
- Reduce ER visits due to drug overdoses to 1,000

This July, we completed a merger with our local 2-1-1 because we recognize the valuable role 2-1-1 plays in connecting families to basic needs and other critical services. We believe 2-1-1 is a critical community asset that needs to play an expanded role in our community.

On a daily basis our 2-1-1 serves individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences - especially underserved or marginalized populations such as seniors, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, people that identify as LGBTQ+, Veterans, American Natives, non-English speakers, and individuals facing complex problems such as substance/opioid use, human trafficking, and domestic violence. We also acknowledge efforts are needed to expand awareness of 2-1-1 and create an understanding that it is a safe place for all people to call. Our organization has a 100 year history of reaching out to the underserved and today we partner with hundreds of businesses, nonprofit

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agencies, and government stakeholders to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems like mental health and crisis.

We encourage the FCC to consider our 2-1-1 work here in Summit County as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 2-1-1 in 2000, we have invested \$3.6 million in the success of 2-1-1 and answer 75,000 requests for help each year. Moreover, each year our United Way invests more than \$6 million in mental health, substance use, health, education, and financial stability services. These critical investments position us to be key partners in the success of an improved mental health and crisis response system.

Another three-digit code may erode the simplicity of a single point of access for community help. Despite concerted efforts by numerous social services, and multiple hotlines, in our community to educate and market the distinctions, a person in crisis will likely always reach for the most familiar or most accessible number. Our 2-1-1 receives calls that are better suited for 9-1-1, and our 9-1-1 partners often receive calls that we can best answer. We recommend that resources should be invested to improve a unified single point of access with a blended partnership of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and United Way's 2-1-1 services. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps, not duplicate services, and will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

You can learn more about our work at www.uwsummit.org and can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at 330-643-5521. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

James F. Mullen
President and CEO